

the media practitioners of Pakistan, working in newspapers and news channels. It aims to study how much do they try to adhere to professional code in seeking truth, minimizing the harm, acting independently and trying to be accountable? Do they compromise on their ethical values due to commercial and political pressures? What is their understanding of themselves as moral agents? Furthermore, it also aims to examine media practitioners' perceptions about role of university education in teaching ethical values.

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### **REGIONAL ONLINE MEDIA OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN MODERN MEDIA SYSTEM**

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**Key words:** new media; convergence; media text; visual journalism, interactivity; technological transformations.

*The main tendencies of development of regional Web journalism are the outcome of the study. Some objective laws governing the function of regional Internet mass media are presented. A special kind of creative activity of journalists in multimedia is studied. Opportunities of news dissemination in social networks and specificity of presence of leading regional media are analyzed.*

The problems of the development of communicative space of regions became evident in the beginning of the XXI century. The relevance of these problems is currently increasing. The structure of informative space readers' preferences, technological equipment of regional media has radically changed recently. Today in Belarus there are 136 state-owned print media. All regional, cities and districts newspapers have their own websites. The main goal of this research is to analyze the effectiveness of communication strategies of the sites of regional newspapers in the transformation of contemporary media sphere. The paper considers the creation of multimedia content as a special type of creative activity of a journalist. Our research is the first attempt to study the specificity of the presence of regional publications in social networks.

Conducted by the author in the second half of 2015, the present study is based on monitoring data and content analysis of regional Internet publications. Available publications from Belarusian catalog in the portal media belsmi.by was selected for analysis. In the study we sought to determine how the regional media are represented on the Internet, what communication strategies are efficiently used. So far, the sector of national online media is still too

young, their development process, their main vectors defining the development of web journalism in the foreseeable future have already been traced quite clearly.

In general, there are two key strategies for the development of sites [3, p. 74]. In the first case, the electronic version is just the digital equivalent of the printed edition, its more advanced option, simply existing in a different form. The Web resource in this case is almost identical to the content of the newspaper. Typically, these sites have low attendance. For such media the main indicator of success is the circulation. In the second case, the site is developed to the level of an independent online media which offers an original content, different from the basic edition. It can be either text written specifically for the site or multimedia materials.

In determining the effectiveness of the regional media sites we were guided by a number of criteria, including attendance, citation, update frequency, the use of multimedia (photos, audio and video), interactivity and availability of profiles in social networks. Attendance showed that the most commonly used types of counters are LiveInternet, Mail.ru and Akavita. If the owner of a site hid the attendance from public view we were not able to verify it. In particular it was found that among the regional editions the greatest attendance belongs to the site of «Gomelskaya pravda» gp.by (7500 unique visitors per day). Visitors come to the site in three main ways: by typing the name of the site in the browser (direct traffic), with the help of external links (traffic junctions) and with the help of search engines (search engine traffic). However, many online media are not fully aware of the specifics of the Internet, which affects their quality and attendance [5, p. 27].

In particular, in May 2013 Onliner.by announced the launch of a special regional office for the Gomel region with its professional editorial staff, catalog of goods and classified advertising. Home for Gomel is located at gomel.onliner.by. The rate of update renewing of

these online resources, compared with the regional state media, is very high. From the moment when the event occurred and until such time as the information about it appears on the page of the information portal is less than an hour. The sites of regional newspapers are insufficiently operational in presenting information.

As one of the modern trends in the development of information processes, we can note a significant increase in the proportion of visual content in materials which are offered to readers. Various media episodes now are combined to create an innovative journalistic product that allows you to fully reflect the evolution of events. Visualization greatly attracts people [2, p. 20]. Moreover, in the headlines the word “picture story”, «photofact», «+photo», «+video» are often used. Publications containing 50-60 illustrations and even more are often found.

The offer of multi-format content and diversification of delivery methods reflect a new stage in the development of convergent processes in the media sphere. Different types of content began to appear on the sites. We are speaking about photo publications and TV spots, slideshows, podcasts, streaming video, infographics, information games, multimedia, articles, etc. The share of visual information in the online media has greatly increased. Emphasis on the disclosure of themes is transferred to the visual images. On the Internet, the user doesn't read, he watches. The result of these trends is the transformation of the traditional mono-format media into multimedia [4, p. 16].

Belarusian regional mediasphere is transforming into a space of open communication, discussion and expression of opinion in the form of comments on the sites of Internet publications and in social networks. In September and October 2015 we monitored the efficiency of public dialogue in leading regional Internet resources in Belarus. The study found out that the greatest number of comments had been left to materials on topics such as accidents, crime, city

events, public transportation and prices. Conflicts can cause considerable resonance publications. It should be recognized that comments are a cornerstone of modern web journalism. At the same time some editors deliberately cut off the possibility of discussing the news on their websites.

After analyzing the quality of feedback on the newspaper's website we found that the activity of the audience in some cases is extremely high [1, p. 8] . In particular, more than 8700 comments have been left since January 2010 on the site of Pruzhany newspaper «Rajonnye budni» budni.by. Over 6400 comments during the same period appeared on the site of Rogachev newspaper «Svabodnae slova» slova.by. Comments on these sites were published without prior moderation. Attendance and citation of these web resources are accordingly high. The structure of some web resources allows us to trace the number of reads of each material.

In determining the effectiveness of the media sites it's necessary to keep in mind such an important criterion as the presence of media in social networks. Today the audience becomes more flexible, easier to be transferred from one media type to another. The analysis led to the conclusion that among the most innovative regional newspapers promotion strategy belongs to «Gomelskaya pravda». The newspaper has five accounts in social networks where it has a total of more than 3000 subscribers. However, the success of media presence in social networks depends not only on the number of subscribers to the page but on the number of active users of the nucleus.

The results of evaluation of the quality characteristics of modern Belarusian media sphere shows that it turns into a space of open communication, discussion and expression of opinion in the pages of numerous social networks and on forums of online sites. Web journalism has surpassed its competitors in the interactivity which has become unprecedented in the history of media and which

realizes in the mass commenting publications reducing differences between author and reader. Today it is an ideal platform for free commenting on all types of «agenda». Here again there is a question of social responsibility, not so much of a web journalist, but of the audience. It is obvious that its participation in the new format becomes a prerequisite for the implementation of media projects.

Parameters of regional information field in Belarus are changing rapidly. Our study revealed that: the existing concepts of sites cannot always be considered successful and meet the level of online media; the potential of social media is not always used effectively; many regional newspapers underestimate the importance of a competent implementation of interactive opportunities; regional media which ignore modern forms of dialogue lose their old audience and don't attract new readers; convergent strategy is preferable in the modern media; many regional media continue to improve their websites, which significantly increase their potential audience; in the future sites of newspapers can become locally focused information portals.

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